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# What does Paul say about the scope of salvation in his epistle to the Romans?

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Dissertation submitted for the Degree of Master of Arts in the University of Chester in part fulfilment of the Modular Programme in Theology

October 2012

# Abstract

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This study seeks to understand the argument for salvation in Romans and what meaning Paul intended for the reader. It will examine the different approaches to salvation, looking at exclusivism and its facets of justification by faith and the doctrine of election. It will also consider inclusivism and universalism and to a lesser extent pluralism. The principal part of the study will be focused on the key texts in the Epistle used by scholars as authority for their arguments. It will use tools of exegesis and historical-critical hermeneutics to determine the extent to which the different approaches are aligned to Paul's theology on salvation.

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# Declaration

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This work is original and has not been submitted previously in support of any qualification or course.

Signed JHenry

Joyphen Henry

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# Acknowledgments

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## Chapter 1 - Introduction

Paul's Epistle to the Romans has been foundational in understanding and sharing God's salvation as offered through the gospel of Christ; yet theologically determining to whom this salvation is offered and to what end, is no easy task. Conscious that Romans has been used to support many contrasting and conflicting responses to this question, the purpose of this study is to determine the scope of salvation in Paul's Epistle. The study will cover various facets and multiplicity of views to his gospel of salvation and the different interpretations by scholars of the biblical texts, in support of their theological arguments. This research will enable me to identify the hermeneutical tensions and, with the help of exegetical tools, to determine to what extent the different theological approaches are aligned to Paul's, in terms of the scope of salvation.

Scholars have classified the key approaches to salvation into a three-fold typology; namely, exclusivism, inclusivism and pluralism (Okholm & Phillips, 1996, 14). In addition to these views, the dissertation will also include a fourth view, classified as universalism, which although seen by some to be synonymous with inclusivism, is different in character. Exclusivism is broadly endorsing a doctrine of limited salvation. This is apparent in both the doctrines of justification by faith and election. Both argue that Paul's soteriology is exclusivist since salvation can only be obtained through Christ, denouncing all other paths (Sanders, 1966, 550). The doctrine of justification by faith, developed by Luther and the doctrine of predestination and election by Calvin, and later by Barth, has met with objections by some scholars. They reject the doctrine of salvation for a few and the limitation of God's grace, in preference for an inclusivist approach, where salvation is not found in the Christian faith alone but also in non-Christian religions where explicit faith exists. The pluralistic approach to salvation is not considered in detail in this study since many scholars taking this approach make little use of the Bible to make their case, preferring instead the tools of philosophy and logic.

Similarly to the inclusivist approach is the universalist view which draws on God's mercy in offering salvation to everyone. The doctrine places an obligation on God

where “all must be saved, whether they like it or not” (McGrath, 1996, 177). These approaches do raise the question of what Paul had in mind in terms of salvation. It is apparent from the diversity of opinions based on the same or similar scriptural texts that the hermeneutical preferences are influenced by either presuppositions or vested interest. It is also possible that the differences in interpretations may be a result of sympathy with other faiths and cultures, thus influencing the judgement of the meaning of Paul’s text on salvation.

Since these key approaches may carry the ‘vested interest’ of scholars, I intend to return to the text to see if I can get a picture of what is argued about salvation in Romans. I will use the tools of exegesis and historical-critical hermeneutics. Although I will focus on the theme of salvation, I am open to the possibility that Paul may not have been concerned to address this theme or that what I find out may not be one coherent message.

Chapter two presents a rationale for the choice of proponent scholars in relation to their particular approach to salvation. It also provides a review of the related literature on exclusivism, inclusivism, universalism and pluralism, showing how scholars use the book of Romans as authority to justify their arguments and conclusions. Chapter three provides an exegesis on the key scriptures used by scholars to validate their case for the doctrines of justification by faith and the election of a few. Chapter four will provide a further exegesis, on the key scriptures used in Romans by scholars, to defend their thoughts on salvation from an inclusivist and universalist perspective. Both chapters three and four will recognise the tensions and the ambiguities resulting from Paul’s use of language, including metaphors and analogies. Finally, chapter five will draw conclusions from the views of scholars in the literature review and the exegetical review of scriptural texts which will contribute to the theological study of salvation in Romans. It will then make recommendations for further research.



## **Chapter 2 - Literature Review**

### **2.1 Introduction**

Scholars have used Paul's epistle to the Romans to support their theological argument on the different approaches to salvation. In this chapter I will give an overview of the main views on salvation and the rationale for my choice of scholars who have been strong proponents of their particular approach. I will investigate each approach separately to determine how scholars use Romans to support justification by faith and the doctrine of election within the exclusivist theory. I will also investigate the extent to which scholars use the epistle to support universalism and inclusivism. This chapter will highlight the contributions to theology via the various approaches by scholars and will provide the basis for the exegetical exercise in the proceeding chapters.

In contemporary scholarship there are three main views of how salvation can be attained: exclusivism, inclusivism and pluralism (Gundry, et al, 1996, 14-15). Exclusivism holds the view that Christ is central to the redemption of the world and that faith is necessary to receive salvation. It is Christ centred and therefore cannot be found in other non-Christian faiths. I have chosen key scholars as the main advocates of the different facets within exclusivism because of the strong biblical and theological arguments in support of their case on salvation. Luther uses Romans 1:16-17 to defend his view that salvation can be achieved through justification by faith only, while Calvin uses Rom. 8: 28-31 to argue the case for the salvation of those elected. I have chosen Barth because of the different hermeneutic approach taken in contrast to Calvin in terms of election.

Inclusivism acknowledges that Christ is the saviour of the world and there is wideness in his grace. He is not only present in the Christian Church but through his Spirit his universal grace saves those in non- Christian faiths. They respond to God through general revelation or the faith in their religion. I have chosen Pinnock and Sanders as the main advocates for inclusivism because they are two of the stronger proponents. Pinnock believes in the doctrine of Christ but maintains that "an inclusivist can see God's grace at work in other people's religious lives" despite not being aware of Christ Jesus as their Saviour (Pinnock, 1996, 61).

Pluralism is a new approach advocating that salvation can be found in other religions; thus denying that salvation is found in Christ alone and promoting religious diversity by maintaining that other religions are equally salvific paths to God. I have mentioned Hick the well-known scholar of pluralism since he is instrumental in developing this approach. He believes salvation takes place in all world religions; a spiritual, moral and political transformation experienced as salvation (Hick, 1996, 43).

There is a fourth view, that of universalism, sometimes interpreted as inclusivist, which will also be considered. It maintains that the redemptive work of God through Christ Jesus should benefit all of humanity. I have chosen Talbott, Ward and O'Collins as the main advocates because of the different strands they put forward in support of universalism, using biblical and theological arguments to support their views including Rom. 5:12-21; 11: 11-35. They all believe that Paul intends all people to benefit from God's free gift of salvation.

Each of these approaches will be considered separately, but pluralism will not be considered in detail since it is not supported by biblical texts and there is no evidence of it being considered in any of Paul's epistles.

### **2.1.1 Exclusivism**

Under the umbrella of Christian exclusivism there are different views on how salvation can be attained. Firstly, Luther agreed that justification is by faith only and those who believe by faith will be saved through the atoning work of Christ. Those who refuse to accept God's gift of salvation will be excluded from eternity with Christ (Luther, 1976, 39-41). Secondly, there is the doctrine of predestination, commonly referred to as election, which supports the belief that some people will be saved while others will be damned. Calvin, an Augustinian, developed a Reformation theology which supports election where God predetermines those who will be saved before the creation of the earth, while the unelected will be excluded from the well spring of salvation. Karl Barth, a twentieth century theologian, not satisfied with the idea of election for a few, has gone further and developed his views on predestination, removing the horror of election of a few, to reveal God's intention to save all people through his mercy and grace. However, Barth does acknowledge that although God's grace and mercy is universal there are some who will choose to reject his

salvation. We will deal with these different approaches to exclusivism in turn and how Romans is used to support them.

### **2.1.2 Justification by faith**

Luther, in developing his understanding of salvation, uses Paul's epistle to the Romans to argue that faith is necessary for salvation in accessing God's salvific plan. In his commentary on Rom. 1:16-17, he comments on the power of God which allows sinners to receive the gift of salvation whilst those who reject the gospel and refuse to be converted will be denied the rewards of salvation. Luther acknowledges that only the gospel reveals the righteousness of God which empowers an individual to conversion (Luther, 1976, 39-41). Luther's commentary makes it clear he understands that all humanity suffers from the imputation of Adam's sin which is the cause of physical death, despite not actually participating in the sin. In the same way, Christ has secured righteousness for all humanity, despite their inability to earn righteousness. Furthermore, he affirms that no one will be justified as a result of works for Paul clearly states in Rom. 3:20 that "...no human being will be justified in the sight of God by deeds prescribed by the law...", (Luther, 1976, 75). It is through Christ Jesus that righteousness has been made known and no human contribution of freewill or merit is necessary because justification is a pure gift from God (Brecht, 1994, 233).

Luther cites Rom. 1:16; 3:22; 5:1, in his assertion that God's righteousness is received through faith in Jesus Christ (Luther, 1976, 77, 88-89). Scholars have built on Luther's work and Marshall advocates that justification is by faith and acknowledges that the effect of Adam's sin is universal. He believes that Paul's writings throughout the epistles, particularly, with their message of justification and righteousness confirms that it is by faith human beings are justified with God. Faith is the "*sine qua non*" for justification according to Marshall and the work of Christ for the justification of all people can only be affected through faith. He explains the difference in the term "all"; salvation is available to all people but is only received when one believes (Marshall, 2003, 63). Johnson agrees with Luther on the faith principle and uses Rom. 1:5, 14-16; 3:22-24, to strengthen his argument that Paul makes it explicitly clear that salvation is for all who believe regardless of ethnicity. However, he goes further, in contrasting it with Rom 5:15-18, to show that the death

and resurrection of Christ Jesus provides a universal salvation for all to be justified by God's grace, ruling out an exclusivist approach for a universal one (Johnson, 2003, 85-86). Dunn cites Rom 3:27-31, where Paul speaks of justification by faith and not by works of the law or by "adopting a distinctively Jewish lifestyle" to be identified separately from Gentiles (Dunn, 1998, 264-366). While Dunn focuses on the words "works" and "faith" and acknowledges Paul's desire to expose the Jews' misunderstanding of the works of the law, Howard, like Chrysostom, believes the emphasis does not rest on the word 'justified' or the word 'faith' but on the word 'man'. Paul's focus is taken to be on 'man' and not on 'a Jew' or 'an Israelite'. In Paul's mind, this means everyone and allows him to introduce an element of universalism. Paul, being aware of likely objections from the Jews on his universal stand of faith, asks the question "is God the God of the Jews only? Is he not the God of the Gentiles (Rom 3:29)?" Howard sums it up by saying the two groups constitute the 'man' who is justified by faith in Rom.3:28, (Howard, 1970, 232-3). According to Luther, Paul's message in Romans affirms that one can only attain salvation through faith in the gospel of Christ Jesus to those who believe.

The view that the Lutheran reading of "justification by faith" is central to the theme of salvation in Romans is supported by some scholars including Käsemann, for whom it constitutes the content of the gospel (Käsemann, 1980, 24). However, it is subject to criticism by other scholars including Wrede, who argues that justification by faith is a polemical doctrine by Paul, to expose the requirement in Judaism for justification by works, as he deals with the strife against Judaism (Wrede, 1907, 122-137). Schweitzer, according to Moo, believes Paul's theological concept of "justification by faith" is a mere "battle doctrine" to oppose Judaizers and that Paul's real thoughts are to be found in his Christology in Romans chapters 5 to 8 (Moo, 1996, 23, 89). Stendahl opposes the traditional view of justification by faith on the ground that Paul's concern is focused on the relation between Jews and Gentiles and not on how salvation is achieved. Whenever Paul uses the word "justification", it is found close to a specific reference to Jews and Gentiles, as cited in Rom.1:16-17; 3:28-29 (Stendahl, 1976, 26). Moo suggests there are objections to the traditional focus of justification by faith, because it is seen as reading Paul's epistle to the Romans through a modern and western lens in relation to the individual and his conscience. Luther's issue was, "How can a sinful person be made right with God?" It was not

what Paul had in mind; according to Moo he sought to work out how Gentiles could be incorporated with the Jews without risking the continuation of God's salvific plan (Moo, 1996, 23) and to explore how Gentiles can be as equally acceptable to God as the Jews were to him (Dunn, 1998, 340).

### **2.1.3 Election**

Augustine believes that God decides the destiny of all humanity, that is, those who would spend eternal life with him, and those who would not. He refers to Romans 8:28-30, where God predestined some while others are left rejected. The predestined are the ones called by God according to his purpose, and so, all who are elected are called but not all the called ones are elected (Knight, 2009, 7). He uses Rom. 9:14-15 to show that there is no unrighteousness or unfairness in God for "salvation is not of who wills or runs but of God showing mercy" (Outler, 1955, 397). Jacob was elected and Esau rejected, yet both were affected by the sinful nature of Adam. Jacob received mercy as a result of God's grace; Esau's rejection was not unfairness but justice from a just God. Augustine argues that Rom. 9:20-21 reveals the limitations to man's capacity, it is grace and not human merits that separates the redeemed from the unredeemed (Outler, 1955, 398).

Calvin, in developing the doctrine further, argues that "predestination is God's eternal decree", that is, God had predetermined in himself before creation what was to become of humanity and who he would elect to be saved. He uses Rom. 8:28-30 to justify his argument for election. God calls and justifies those whom he had already appointed in eternity that he might glorify them. Their calling takes place when it pleases God to bestow his grace on them (Kerr, 1989, 117-119). Johnson disagrees with the interpretation that Paul's teaching in Rom. 8: 28-39 is about limited salvation or even the scope of salvation. Instead, he believes Paul is focusing on the benefits that believers receive in the family of God (Johnson, 2003, 86-87).

Calvin believes that some individuals are created to receive salvation while others are left void of God's grace. He cites scripture texts from Eph. 1:4-7 and Col. 1:22 to assert that those chosen are expected to bring glory to God (McNeill, 2006, 926). He acknowledges the complexity of the doctrine of election but, like Augustine, accepts God is not unjust and will have mercy on whom he chooses and likewise reject

others as he will, citing Rom. 9:18 (McNeill, 2006, 947). Johnson interprets Rom 9:18 differently by rejecting Calvin's interpretation. He believes Paul is showing God's strategy of redeeming all that stood condemned through the gospel. He argues that God's choice of individuals such as Jacob instead of Esau should be considered in the context of Romans, in order to see the mercy of God in his salvific plan (Johnson, 2003, 87). Calvin uses Rom. 11:5-6 to argue that some are saved as a result of the generosity of God's election of grace and not by works, affirming that God preserves only those he chooses to preserve (McNeill, 2006, 921-922). He asserts the permanence of election; the elect are required to persevere in the faith to the end (McNeill, 2006, 972). Calvin uses Romans to develop the doctrine of election where salvation is not attained by one's decision to choose God but by being elected by God before the creation of the world. Pinnock does not accept election as a doctrine and objects to it being considered soteriologically. Rather, he believes, "electing some on behalf of many", is God's way of showing his love for humanity (Pinnock 1992, 23).

Barth, a more recent theologian, supports election in Romans 8:28-31 and agrees with Calvin that God elects but with a different thrust. He argues that God self-elects in order to reveal himself in Christ, and humanity in turn is then elected in Christ. He uses Rom. 8:29 to speak of the self-electing God who can only be recognised in Jesus Christ, who is the "true witness and voice from heaven". The elected in Christ are called to be "secondary" witnesses bearing the voice of God (Barth, 1957, 424). It is those who love God who are called by him and this calling separates them from those who do not love him, Rom. 8: 28, (Barth, 1933, 322-324).

Barth disagrees with Calvin's treatment of predestination where God is separated from Christ Jesus, bypassing the grace of God as it appears in Jesus (Barth, 1957, 111). Unlike Calvin, he believes the focus should be on Christ Jesus who is central to the gospel in the epistle to the Romans rather than on God only. He uses Romans 9: 11-13 to argue that the two aspects of double predestination should not be conceptualised into two different groups of recipients, but rather that God takes on the rejection of the unbelievers and through Christ offers salvation to them (Barth, 1957, 161-168). Barth rejects the Reformers "quantitative and psychological" views of double predestination in terms of the individual and argues that the emphasis lies in God's concern with the individual. Although Jacob is loved and Esau hated, God is

the God of them both and “God rejects so that he can elect” (Barth, 1933, 347, 350). Barth uses Rom. 3: 24 and 9:14-18 to speak of God’s election of grace which is central to the doctrine of election, as election is central to the gospel. All humanity is elected in Christ and all people are saved as a result of his election (Barth, 1957, 11; Barth, 1933, 102-103; Greggs, 2009, 26-33). Barth avoids the quantitative problem of election and argues that where sin reigned in death, grace through Christ, abounds more exceedingly to eternal life (Barth, 1933, 187

Although he does not directly endorse universalism, he places great emphasis on the universality of God’s grace and mercy to save every one. Nimmo, in supporting Barth, suggests that any “universalism” associated with Barth, must be a “highly particular universalism” where God is the “predication of salvation” in Christ Jesus (Nimmo, 2010, 35). For God, through Christ, suffers the rejection of human beings, and offers salvation to humanity. Barth uses Romans to interpret election to mean that God’s election in Christ refers to the whole human race, for Christ the elected one, elects humanity to himself.

## **2.2 Universalism**

Universalism uses certain texts in Romans to justify the view that all people will be saved through the work of Christ either in this life or postmortem. There are various forms of universalism with different concepts of salvation but the following explanation by Parry and Partridge provides a reasonable picture of the type of universalism being considered:

‘Christian universalism ... the commitment to working within a Christian theological framework (and) the claim that all individuals will be saved through the work of Christ’. (Parry and Partridge, 2003, xxi).

The universalists focus on bringing about a portrait of a loving God who wills all people to be saved. Reference is always made with emphasis on Rom. 5: 18-19 “...just as one man’s trespass led to condemnation for all, so one man’s act of righteousness leads to justification and life for all...” and 1 Cor. 15:22, “for as all die in Adam, so all will be made alive in Christ”.

According to MacDonald, Paul seeks to establish in Romans 5 the free justification by God’s grace and that the redemption offered by Christ is “as wide as sin’s

corruption in that it reaches everyone” (MacDonald, 2008, 79). It is held that the work of Christ on the cross reverses the consequences of Adam’s sins for humanity. Through Adam many died; through Christ many will live. This view is supported by those who anticipate salvation for all. Ward interprets “in Adam all die” to mean that all human beings share in the separation from God not as a result of ancestral sin, but estrangement from the light of God and obedience to his moral will. Similarly, knowledge of the historical Jesus is not necessary for human beings to be reconciled in God. The result of Adam’s original sin brought judgement and condemnation but the act of God’s righteousness brings life through justification to all people. The obedience of Christ, unlike Adam’s action, provides the source for all to be made righteous (Ward, 2004, 78-9, 87-88). MacDonald asserts that in Rom.3:23 and 5: 17-19 the reference to “all people” who had sinned and were condemned are the “same people” who would be justified in Christ. He refers to the use of parallelism in verses 17 and 18 to prove his argument (MacDonald, 2008, 80).

Universalists agree that the grace of the last Adam, Christ Jesus, extends to all humanity (O’Collins, 2008, 140). The “many” in verse 19 is taken to mean “all” and this is commonly accepted among those supporting universalism. Paul teaches that it is believers who are justified and also that not all will believe. However, MacDonald argues that Paul believes that all will eventually believe and this allows him to maintain that salvation is for believers; hence the grounds for universalism, identifying the apparent universalist conclusion present in Rom. 5:18-19. To justify his argument, he argues that humanity does nothing to obtain salvation; it is by God’s grace it is received. He agrees with Talbott that Paul uses the word “receive” in a passive sense and not in the active sense “to take”. MacDonald believes Paul is referring to humanity being the recipient of God’s grace without limiting the “universal” thrust in verses 18-19 (MacDonald, 2008, 80). Talbott supports this argument and argues that what the work of the second Adam does for humanity is equal to and far greater than the works of the first Adam in line with verse 17 (Talbott, 2003, 254). MacDonald also points out that the “many” in verse 19 does not refer to fewer than “all” because the terms “many” and “all” in these verses including verse 15 encompass all of humanity. He argues that the same people who were affected by Adam’s sin are the recipients of God’s salvation, whether Jews or Gentiles, and that



Paul's focus is clearly on "universality", the work of Christ in his atonement for all (MacDonald, 2008,80-82).

Contrary to this interpretation, Marshall argues: "the effects of Adam's sin were inevitable and universal--- people are put right with God by faith and this is --- true of the language of justification and righteousness---" based on what Paul wrote in Rom. 5:18-19 (Marshall, 2003, 63). He also points out that while it is correct that:

"all" who are in Adam die, it does not necessarily apply that the "all" in Christ means all human beings are saved, it is "those who belong to him" (Marshall, 2003,70).

Rapinchuk supports Marshall, maintaining that in the language of Paul the 'all' does not necessarily represent a universal salvation for all of humanity "without exception", but rather, salvation by faith is available to all "without ethnic distinction" (Rapinchuk, 1999, 427-428). Therefore, only those who believe in Christ will receive salvation despite their ethnicity.

Talbott, a strong supporter of salvation for all "without exception" and a hard universalist, believes that the "all in Adam" and the 'all in Christ' are to be seen as co-extensive and that through the work of Christ on the cross all people will be saved (Talbott, 2003, 253). Talbott proposes a second chance for unbelievers. He sees the punishment after the first death as purifying and restorative and that those separated from God "will be saved, but only as through the purifying fire". He believes that unbelievers will not be able to reject God when they come in contact with God's love, but will accept him (Talbott, 2003, 43). According to Strange, some universalists are of the belief that everyone deserves salvation while the "hardliners" such as Talbott believe that everyone, including the unbelievers who do not deserve salvation, should benefit from it as a "divine supererogatory goodness" from God (Strange, 2001, 157-8). Johnson uses Rom. 5: 15-19; 6:23 to justify the theological basis for universal salvation and Rom. 8:35-39 to support his argument that nothing in creation can separate us from God's inescapable love. He is hopeful about the fate of the persistent unbeliever on the basis of Paul's argument in Romans Chapter 11 that in the end God will be merciful to all (Johnson, 2003, 86, 97-98). Universalists use the epistle to the Romans to demonstrate universalism in Paul's writings, widening the scope of salvation to include all people.

## 2.3 Inclusivism

The basic biblical principle of inclusivism is that God is universally present and is manifested in Christ Jesus. His grace is at work and available in all cultures. Unlike exclusivism, the supporters of inclusivism believe that there are others who have not heard of Jesus but who through God's own divine revelation will come to believe. They believe that "all Christians are believers but that not all believers are Christians", allowing for those who believe yet are unaware of Christ (Sanders, 1992, 225). Rahner, an inclusivist, describes such people as 'anonymous Christians', who benefit from God's universal salvation. While Christian believers have explicit faith, the 'anonymous Christian' has what Rahner coined as 'implicit faith' which is also salvific (McCool, 1975, 212). Inclusivism portrays implicit faith as saving faith for those who believe in God alone, either because they lived before Christ or if post-Christ, he has not been revealed to them, citing Rom. 4: 1-24 to substantiate justification by faith to Abraham. Inclusivists interpret Rom. 4:24 to mean that Paul is suggesting believing in Abraham's God for salvation and not that knowledge about the resurrection is essential (Sanders, 1992, 227-228).

Pinnock advocates an optimistic view of salvation in Paul's epistle in that everyone has the opportunity to be saved. He refers to Rom. 1:19-20 and 2:14-16 to affirm that God has made himself known to all humanity not just through the Mosaic Laws as given to the Jews, but that everyone has God's moral law written in their hearts and therefore they have no excuse to deny knowledge of God. Sanders holds similar views; he believes God reaches out to the unevangelised through Jesus and the Holy Spirit, by way of general revelation, conscience and culture (Sanders, 1995, 36). Sanders cites Rom. 1: 19-20; as the authority that God's divinity is revealed through his created order in general revelation. The knowledge obtained from the revelation is as a result of God's instructions and not by human merits. Inclusivists affirm Paul's assertion of the universal sinfulness of humanity that, "all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God", as cited in Rom 3:23 but rejects any views that suggest judgement is God's final word on sinful human beings. They believe Paul uses Rom. 5 to declare salvation, through the death of Jesus, for all sinners "under the judgement" spoken of in Rom. 3, (Sanders, 1992, 233-236).

Pinnock thinks it is plausible to believe every person in this world has access to God's truth, despite not knowing about Jesus. He believes that Paul is adamant that the only way humanity can be saved is through the redemptive grace of God through Christ. He refers to Paul's other epistles to demonstrate his thoughts on this possibility. Paul identifies Jesus as the 'cosmic Christ': 'For by him all things were created... and in him all things hold together', Col. 1:16-17. Pinnock refers to Rom. 5:12-21 to support the argument that Paul is thinking of salvation for humanity without exception. He frowns on the pessimism of Christians and their limitation of God's salvation in Christ and finds hope in the revelation of John in Rev. 22:2 and believes that salvation will be 'extensive in number' and 'comprehensive in scope' (Pinnock, 1977, 34-35).

Pinnock uses the imagery of the first Adam through whom the entire human race was inflicted with sin, and Christ, the second Adam, who rescued the entire human race from sin and death, to demonstrate the dimension of universality in Paul's thoughts (Rom. 5:18). The contrasting of the two Adams is often used to illustrate the scope of salvation. Yet he does not go as far as Talbott in supporting universal salvation for all. Reference is also made to 1 Cor. 15:22 re-affirming the inclusiveness of the gospel: 'For as in Adam all die, so in Christ shall all live'. The resurrection of Christ guarantees the resurrection of humanity. Pinnock is of the belief that 'Paul had a great understanding of the global reach of God's salvation' (Pinnock, 1997 34; Johnson, 2003, 85)). He strongly refutes the idea that a few will be saved and the majority perish since the scope of salvation is unlimited in Christ. He finds assurance in John's vision that 'All nations will come and worship before you, for your righteous acts have been revealed,' Rev. 15:4. God will have the final victory over all those who resisted him and in the end everyone will acknowledge God, Rom. 14:11 (Pinnock, 1997, 33-35, Johnson, 2003, 86). This idea of God's generosity is shared by John Stott, an evangelical apologist who admits that he hopes the majority of the human race will be saved (Pinnock, 1997, 35). Pinnock argues for the wideness of God's salvation but still he opposes pluralists such as John Hick who view universal salvation through a theocratic rather than a Christocentric theology, where the focus is not on Christ and his work. Pinnock clearly states that to know God as love, can only be accomplished through Christ Jesus who is a 'self- characterisation' of God (Pinnock, 1997, 44-45). Pinnock, in defending optimism of salvation, admits that

although salvation may exist for everyone, it is not received automatically and neither is it possible to “affirm the actuality of salvation for all” (Pinnock, 1997, 43). This view is also shared by Johnson who believes that the biblical scriptures affirm the universality of God’s gift of salvation, Rom. 1:5, 16; 14: 14-16. He dismisses the traditional view of salvation for a few in Romans and argues that the character of God is “important in assessing the outcome of salvation” (Johnson, 2003. 77, 84, 85). This is supported by Tiessen who asserts that those whom God selects for salvation are saved by grace through faith according to Romans and emphasises that the process of salvation is the same for everyone despite age or mental capability (Tiessen, 2004, 25). Sanders supports the inclusivist view that God is generous in mercy and his magnanimous desire is to save every human being, using Rom. 5: 18 to support the argument that Christ died to redeem everyone, dismissing condemnation for the unrepentant (Sanders, 1995, 24).

Inclusivists use Romans to justify the view that salvation is attained by explicit faith for Christians and by implicit faith and the work of the Holy Spirit for non-Christians who believe in God as a result of general revelation. They are dismissive of salvation for a few Christians only and are supporters of the abundance of God’s grace in forgiving sin.

## **2.4 Pluralism**

The pluralistic approach holds that all major religions lead to God and that Christ Jesus is not the only way to God and salvation. Hick has contributed extensively to this viewpoint. His preference for a pluralistic approach is derived from his personal experience and observations resulting from his involvement in multi-faith dialogues. He argues against Christianity being the only source of salvation through Christ. He makes the assumption that if salvation is the transformation from self-centredness to a new reality centred in God and manifested in political, moral and spiritual change, then salvation is taking place within all religions (Hick, 1996, 39). The pluralist view of salvation for all will not be considered further since it is based on logic rather than tradition. It is not supported by biblical theology and it is unlikely that Paul would have considered it since he was interested in salvation for all through Christ Jesus only.

## **2.5 Conclusion**

It is evident that scholarship leads us to a place of ambiguity on the scope of salvation in the Pauline texts. The soteriology in Romans hinges on the interpretation of the metaphoric language and Greek translation by the various scholarships. Some scholars agree on the point that all humanity has sinned, although they do not necessarily agree on how the sin is imputed (Rapinchuk, 1999, 428-429). The idea of justification by faith has its limitations; it does not allow for those who are not Christians and those who have never had the opportunity to hear and respond to the gospel. Ward argues that faith, in accordance with New Testament scriptures, cannot be confined to Christians alone, citing the author of the Book of Hebrews reference to non-Christians who are exemplars of faith. There is the question of whether it is faith in Christ Jesus or faith in the existence of God that provides salvation (Ward, 2004, 88-89). There are also differences of opinion on election and predestination and what Paul really means when he speaks of election. The thought of 'few' for heaven and 'many' for damnation seems to contradict some of Paul's statements on who will be saved. Those supporting inclusivism dismiss the exclusivist theory of separation but fail to provide biblical texts in Romans, to show that Paul assures salvation for everyone. The literature fails to agree on who will be saved and what will happen to the unsaved. Will all Gentiles and all Jews be saved? Will the unsaved be annihilated? There is no overall solution except the fact that God is a God of love, grace and mercy. Universalism places an obligation on God to save all people whether in this life or the next. The scripture texts used to substantiate this approach are not in harmony with the epistle of Romans and therefore do not provide any clarity or guarantee of salvation for all people. Some texts do support universalism while others speak against it, Rom. 11:25-32; 1 Cor. 1:8; 2 Thess. 1:8-9 (Whiteley, 1974, 273). It is evident in the literature that there are two over-riding views, one that only some people will be saved and the other that all people will be saved. Since the question on the scope of salvation in Paul's epistle to the Romans remains unanswered, it is now necessary to revisit the scriptures and search out evidence and answers to the question.

## **Chapter 3 - Salvation: Justification by Faith or Election**

In this chapter I will undertake an exegetical review of the three key texts in Romans used by scholars to defend various forms of exclusivism. Firstly, I will focus on Rom.1:16-17, the key text used to develop the doctrine of justification by faith. Secondly, I will examine the texts in Rom 8:28-30 and 9:10 which have been used to support the doctrine of election. From the exegesis I will examine what Paul opines about salvation.

### **3.1 Justification by faith**

#### **For I am not ashamed of the gospel**

“For I am not ashamed of the gospel; it is the power of God for salvation, to everyone who has faith, to the Jews first and also to the Greek. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed through faith for faith; as it is written, the one who is righteous will live by faith”.

It is widely accepted that Rom. 1: 16-17 is the central theme of the epistle (Jewett, 2007, 135), but there are a few commentators who believe the main theme is found in 16b – 17 (Cranfield, 1975, 87; Käsemann, 1980, 21-22). The main theme of the gospel is indeed visible in Rom. 1:16b-17 but to separate v16b from it, is to do it an injustice, since, “I am not ashamed of the gospel” by Paul, the apostle to the Gentiles, is to contrast the difference in the current political and religious powers to the great power of the message he preaches. Paul, having been a strict observer of the traditions and Jewish Law, realises, after his conversion, that the Jesus’ death on the cross was not a shameful event or curse as was held by the Jews. In it, the power of God performed a miracle, the miracle of salvation where humanity can be transformed from a depraved state, back into the image and likeness of God, like himself. Paul’s confession is not a negative one when he admits that he is not ashamed of the gospel. He has the knowledge that this gospel, that is looked on shamefully and the cause of persecution and martyrdom for many believers is the power of the omnipotent God in Christ Jesus who was resurrected from the dead, as cited in Rom 1:3-4. It does not discriminate; it is inclusive of Jews and Greeks. How can one be ashamed of the gospel when it reveals God and his righteousness? Paul wants to convey this to his audience of Jews and Gentiles in Rome. It is possible that Paul, being aware of the political and social environment of his audience, wants to provide an antithesis between the power of Rome and the lasting power of God

which requires no human intervention. Jewett believes that this confession presents Paul as the ambassador of the gospel and that salvation does not come from Rome but the gospel of Christ (Jewett, 2007, 138-139).

To fully comprehend Paul's message of salvation in Rom. 1:16 -17, it is pertinent to consider what he is saying in the preceding texts and the ones that follow after. Paul had already accepted his audience as believers but in the epistle he wants to exposit the gospel more fully to them.

### **It is the power of God for salvation**

Paul speaks of the gospel as "the power of God for salvation". In this epistle, Paul uses the metaphor "salvation" several times (Rom.1:16, 10:1, 10; 11:11) to denote its importance of bringing one to safety in the sense of "perseverance" (Dunn, 1988, 39). "Salvation" is a term familiar with the Jews because of the historic events relating to the exodus from Egypt and the return of the exiles from Babylon. Dunn observes that "the power of God" is a concept used regularly by Paul by which he means the operative and transforming power of God (Dunn, 1988, 39). I believe Paul wants his audience to realise salvation is in the gospel and without the gospel there can be no salvation for within the gospel is the power of God.

God is offering preservation from the final judgement and access to eternal bliss through his power in the gospel. Not only is salvation available in the gospel in the present time but also in the future Rom 8: 11. This view echoes the interpretation of some commentators. Barrett believes that for Paul, salvation is eschatological, in that, it is available in the present to preserve believers on the journey through trials and divine judgement to eternal glory (Barrett, 1991, 28). Käsemann agrees, concluding that, "the operation of God's power corresponds to its eschatological nature". Yet in terms of Rom. 8:24 "salvation has become a reality through Christ in the midst of the world" (Käsemann, 1980, 22). The commentators concur that the power found in the gospel of Christ preached by Paul is a superior power with an eschatological feature. It is not dependent on ethnicity, merits or even the keeping of the law to function in the life of those who believe; it is solely God's divine will to provide salvation without limit through the gospel. For Paul, the climax of the gospel is Christ crucified and resurrected and in it the power of God is operative in providing salvation for all humanity.

## **To everyone who has faith**

Paul goes on to assert that this salvation is available to “everyone who has faith”. Some translations read, “to all who believe”. Here, he uses the present tense implying continuity in the salvation process and faith of the believer. The reference to “everyone” or “all” is inclusive with a universal scope. Salvation is available to all but Paul does not end with “all” but qualifies it with “who believe”, inferring that salvation is received when one accepts the gospel which has power to deliver and transform lives. When the word “all” is compared with other texts in Rom. 1: 5; 3:9, 22, 23, it is inclusive since “all” means everyone. Some commentators recognise a universality in the text with the use of “everyone or “all” (Käsemann, 1980, 22). Cranfield interprets the “all” to be “for all who accept the gospel, without exception and without distinction” (Cranfield, 1975, 90). Dunn believes that Paul’s emphasis on “all who have faith”, is an important expression in the structure of the epistle, for God expects persistence in the attitude of faith and it is “not a once-for-all... act of faith” (Dunn, 1988, 40; Dunn, 1988, 665). These commentators, in taking account of the word “all” do recognise that Paul is being inclusive but I believe in this instance, the adjective “all” and the pronoun “who” should be considered together. The significance of the “all who” suggests that Paul is saying salvation is available only to all those who believe by faith. It is conditional and “freewill”, though not mentioned in this text, is implicitly present.

The word faith (*pistis*) can be translated to mean “belief”, or “faithfulness”. Paul uses it in various ways depending on what he wants to convey to his audience, see Rom. 3:2; 4:20 (Ziesler, 1989, 69). Paul wishes to elicit ‘faith’ in Rom.1:16, since faith is deemed to be an individual necessity of salvation, he is asserting no faith, no salvation (Ellis, 1982, 208). This is also expressed in 1Cor. 1:21b, where God will save those who hear the gospel and believe. According to Käsemann, faith is not “a supra-individual” experience or an action to respond to “God’s loving disposition” towards humanity but in receiving God’s righteousness; it is expressed in one’s obedience (Käsemann, 1980, 23, 94). Bultmann suggests that Paul understands faith to be “obedience” in accepting and confessing the gospel of Christ (Bultmann, 1965, 314-315). Whiteley, like Cranfield, does not believe Paul meant it as a “prior” condition but rather as a result of God’s activity of salvation, although Paul’s language may suggest that “faith” is a condition of salvation with an overtone of



“obedience and intellectual acceptance” (Whiteley, 1974, 162-164; Cranfield, 1975, 89-90). Jewett agrees that Paul intends the gospel to be a means of salvation and to be experienced by faith only (Jewett, 2007, 139). Although faith is the goal and purpose, that is the “terminus ad quem” of the gospel, it has another twist to it in the words of Jüngel, in that it is “salvation for the ungodly” (Jüngel, 2006, 89). Luther expresses it as justification for sinners (Luther, 1976, 80), while Ridderbos declares it to be “justification of the ungodly” (Ridderbos, 1977, 171). Cranfield acknowledges that faith is not a qualification for salvation, otherwise, it would be construed as a contribution from a “meritorious” act and yet it is “man’s own personal decision” an expression of freedom to obey God (Cranfield, 1975, 90). The general consensus supports the explicitness of faith for salvation and that faith is given by God only. The recipients of this faith will respond to the gospel and this is unanimously supported but the “when” and “how” lacks clarity. The preposition “with” implies having faith at the time the gospel is being received so faith could be seen to be a prior condition, even though there is no time span that can be used to support this argument. If faith is not prior to the gospel but a response to the gospel, then it must exist at a point before the response takes place or is activated simultaneously with the response. The text does not deal with how faith is attained but in Rom 10:17, Paul makes it explicitly clear that “faith comes from what is heard, and what is heard comes through the word of Christ”. There could be an argument for human contribution in the decision to respond to the gospel, but it is unlikely that Paul has human contribution in mind but the willingness to obedience. Paul’s gospel is about justification by faith and not works as required by Judaism. It requires saving faith as the only means for attaining salvation by both Jews and Gentiles.

### **To the Jews first and also to the Greek**

There is a shift in Paul’s view of salvation. Before conversion, it had been by works, but after conversion it is by faith in Christ. Salvation had been for the Jews only, but now Paul is asserting its universal accessibility, for Jews and Gentiles, though not all will accept it (Rom. 10:16). The salvation by faith that Paul speaks about is “to the Jew first and also to the Greek”. By positioning the “Jew first” Paul is not in any way making the gospel less relevant to the Greeks or discriminating against them but Paul recognises the Jews as God’s chosen people. The salvation history commenced with Israel and salvation is of the Jews as cited in various scriptural texts

(Jn. 4:22; Rom. 3:1-2; 9:4-5). Paul is not suggesting favouritism here but acknowledging a biblical truth. Barth has made a legitimate point that the advantage of being the chosen nation does not permit “any favours or precedence”; everyone has a responsibility to respond to the gospel (Barth, 1933, 40). I support Jewett’s view that the antithesis that Paul draws between Jew and Greek is to be interpreted as the same antithesis between Jews and Gentiles elsewhere in the texts (Jewett, 2007, 140). It should not be overlooked that Paul’s use of language changes as he takes into consideration the current environment of his audience. Sometimes, he gives the impression of being “politically correct” in order not to cause offence, even though that is exactly what his gospel does. It is an offence to the Jews. However, from what he says about Jews and Gentiles it can be assumed that salvation is available not to the Jews only but to all non-Jews. Salvation is universal, but one can only benefit from it if faith is appropriated. The Jews are not required to receive it on the basis of works and the Gentiles are not required to meet the requirements of the Jewish Law. Paul is saying salvation is a gift from God to the whole of humanity, as a result of his righteousness. This righteousness is revealed in the same gospel that offers salvation to all, destroying the divide between Jews and Gentiles and uniting them as one nation (Rom.12:10).

### **The righteousness of God is revealed**

The power of God is in the gospel (Rom1:16b) and in it “ the righteousness of God is revealed through faith for faith” (v.17) According to Moo the verb “for being revealed” is an important biblical term, meaning to “uncover” and Paul uses both this verb and its noun, “revelation” when he is referring to either the eschatological disclosure of the various aspects of God’s salvific plan or in terms of the language and concepts of Jewish apocalyptic when he is denoting the uncovering of God’s redemptive plan in the history of salvation. If Paul is seen to adopt the former use, then he is expressing the way the righteousness of God is revealed. Moo prefers the latter, where Paul shows how the gospel brings into existence God’s righteousness, which is more fitting for the verb as applied in v. 17- 18, and so frequently used by Paul (Moo, 1996, 69). The manifestation of God’s righteousness is more than disclosure to “human apprehension”. In Pauline theology, it means revealed in action and operation, with saving effect “brought to bear upon man’s sinful situation” to salvation (Murray, 1968, 29). Since “is revealed” is in the present tense and not the aorist tense; it is likely

that Paul sees the revelation as unfolding at different stages, as the believer's faith increases from stage to stage and experiences a greater knowledge of the righteousness of God in the power of the gospel. Dunn purports that by using "is revealed", Paul is describing the on-going impact of the gospel, as converts experience the effect in bringing them into a relationship with God which once was a "Jewish prerogative" (Dunn, 1988, 48).

Paul asserts that in the gospel "the righteousness of God is revealed...". What does he mean by the righteousness of God? The word "righteousness" (*dikaiosynē*), is used in the Old Testament and can mean "virtue", "justification", "justice" or "uprightness" (Ellis, 1982, 208). In Rom. 3:10, Paul quotes from the Psalms 14:1-3 that "there is no one who is righteous". If this is Paul's intention, the righteousness revealed in the gospel does not make the believer righteous as God is, but allows the individual to be declared righteous, to live in the likeness and image of God. Alternatively, the righteousness of God might mean an attribute of God, a state of God, similarly to God being love and in the same way as his love is manifested in the gospel, his righteousness is revealed in the gospel. It is likely that Paul intends his audience to understand the righteousness of God as the offer of salvation through the gospel parallel to the righteousness cited in Rom. 3:21-2 where humanity is legally declared righteous through acceptance of the gospel.

Within the boundaries of the doctrine of justification by faith, scholarship has disagreed on what Paul really intended his audience to understand by "the righteousness of God". The Greek translation is not clear and gives rise to the question as to whether the righteousness of God is subjective genitive, that is, where it is an activity of God or is it an objective genitive where it is something God does, such as conferring his righteousness as a gift. According to Dunn, from a Greek perspective, righteousness is an ideal against which an individual's action can be measured in contrast to the Hebrew perspective where it is thought to be a "more relational concept," where the individual has to meet certain obligations as a result of the relationship shared (Dunn, 1998, 341). Therefore God's righteousness can be seen as his own faithfulness in creating human beings and making covenants and promises to them. Dunn identifies Paul's two-fold meaning of the "righteousness of God" in relation to his theology of justification, to be understood as God's saving action on all who believe and God's faithfulness to Israel. The gospel which is the

“power of God for salvation” is, in fact, God’s righteousness revealed in his “activity in drawing into and sustaining covenant relationship” with humanity (Dunn, 1998, 344; Dunn, 1988, 41). Howard concludes by saying it is a “righteous God” who imparts righteousness to “make (those who respond) righteous” (Howard, 1970, 226) and Bultmann believes it is the condition for receiving salvation in the same way as “Abraham’s righteousness was the presupposition for receiving the promise” (Bultmann, 1965, 270).

Cranfield dismisses the subjective genitive and supports the objective genitive where righteousness is God’s gift to humanity. He believes it “agrees with the structure of the argument in the epistle” with reference to Rom.1:17 and other texts in the epistle (Cranfield, 1975, 98). Käsemann believes the “righteousness of God” speaks of him bringing “back the fallen world into the sphere of his legitimate claim” (Käsemann, 1980, 29.) According to Jewett, the “righteousness of God” is not a technical term but the act of God by which he brings humanity into relationship with him, an inclusivism where Jews and Gentiles all have access to the Gospel on equal terms (Jewett, 2007 142). Ridderbos believes Paul’s view of righteousness is the objective genitive of source where it is that quality of righteousness bestowed by God on humanity so that they can stand before him. Paul regards it as eschatologically present in contrast to the Jewish hope of God’s righteousness to be conferred on them in the future (Ridderbos, 1977, 163). Jewett disagrees with commentators who opt for the objective genitive, for since God’s “power” in 1:16 and his “wrath” in 1:18 are subjective, it is likely that the “righteousness of God” in 1:17 should also be taken as a subjective genitive and not objective. According to Jewett, commentators, including Dunn, who believe Paul intended both the subjective and objective genitive in 1:17 have disregarded the contextual and grammatical evidence (Jewett, 2007 142). It is apparent from the various commentaries that commentators have not agreed unanimously on what Paul meant by the righteousness of God. Despite objections to the use of both the objective and subjective genitive, it should not be dismissed because the interpretation provides a clear picture of a righteous God, offering salvation to humanity and providing the source by which a relationship can be maintained. Paul informs his audience that the righteousness of God is not a “one-off” experience, it is revealed as faith grows from one level to another.

### **Through faith for faith**

The righteousness of God is revealed “through faith for faith” (v.17). There is a parallel “to everyone that believeth” in v.16 and “faith to faith” in v. 17, having the same interpretation of Paul’s words in Rom. 3:22; Gal. 3:22b “the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe” (Murray, 1968, 31). Some interpretations provide a different understanding of “faith for faith” in Rom. 1:17. Stegman agrees that Paul’s assertion of the righteousness of God is intricately connected with faith and linked to Habakkuk 2:4, which goes beyond faith to declare it as a Messianic prophecy with Jesus as the righteous one (Stegman, 2011, 512-513). Although Stegmann might be correct, it is more likely that Paul is dealing with faith which is pertinent to his message. Jewett believes Paul is focusing on faith communities when he speaks of “all who believe” (Jewett, 2007, 146-147), unlike Luther who opts for individualism (Luther, 1976, 41). Throughout the epistle there are ambiguities in some of the texts and it is not that they are necessarily wrong but each has to be considered in the light of what was taking place at the time. The fact that Paul might have communities in mind, is not to be disputed but neither can we ignore the importance of the individual to him. Rom.1: 16-17 is a message to Jews and Gentiles, and the signs of individualism are explicit in the doctrine of justification of faith for it is pertinent that the believer lives by faith.

### **The righteous will live by faith**

Paul’s quotation in v. 17 referring to the Old Testament, Hab. 2.4, “the one who is righteous will live by faith”, has led to various interpretations. Barrett identifies the ambiguity in the Hebrew translation which reads, “he that is righteous shall live by his faithfulness”, [referring to the individual], while the Greek reads, “... by my faithfulness” [referring to God’s faithfulness], (Barrett, 1991, 32). This raises the question of whether Paul has in mind God’s faithfulness or that of the believer. Barrett does not believe Paul is playing on the ambiguity of the translations. Paul did not use any of the pronouns, “his” and “my” with the likely intention of emphasising the importance of “faith all the time”; the believers’ righteousness is by faith and he is called to live by faith (Barrett, 1991, 32). For Dunn, Paul probably intends the quotation to provide a richer meaning to his audience. Those who by the act of faith receive the gospel shall continue to live by faith (Dunn, 1988, 48-49). Murray questions Paul’s intention, “The righteous by faith shall live” or “The righteous shall live by faith”? According to Murray, in the context of the theme, Paul speaks of the

righteousness of God by faith and those who benefit from it do so by faith (Murray, 1968, 33). I support Dunn's view that it is unlikely that Paul is oblivious to the ambiguity in the quotation from Habakkuk. As a missionary to the Gentiles, I believe it is likely that he earnestly wants his audience to get a full understanding of what the gospel is about and the importance of faith as a continuing motivation for life. The ambiguity does not detract from the message. Paul wants his audience to understand that the transformed believer lives by the faith God gives him or her, and in doing so, lives by God's faithfulness, for no human being can ever live by his own faithfulness. To do so, would misinterpret Paul's gospel, which is by faith and not by any human contribution of works.

### **Justification not by works**

In addition to justification by faith, Paul speaks out against justification by works. According to Dunn, despite Paul's Jewish heritage, he is rebutting and disowning Judaism as inferred in Rom. 3:20, 28; Gal. 2:16, as a result of his own conversion, where Christ replaces the law (Dunn, 1998, 346). Paul, in speaking of justification, shows that the condition to which the sinner is acquitted is not in keeping the Law as the Jews thought and neither is it the accomplishment of good works (Rom. 3: 20). Both Jews and Gentiles alike are under sin with or without the Law (Rom.3:9), as the righteousness of God is revealed without the law (Bultmann, 1965, 279 -282). Justification by faith is God's divine response in providing the righteousness humanity lacks, exchanging sinfulness for his righteousness and a gospel that offers "salvation" to "sinners" (Westerholme, 2004, 262-264). Käsemann sees Paul's notion of God's righteousness as the justification of humanity revealed in the actuality of God's saving power and his right to his creation, the whole world and not the individual alone (Käsemann, 1980, 93). The eschatological aspect of justification involves the believer and the whole cosmos, as Paul declares in Rom. 8:22. In the final day, the whole universe will experience salvation, but in terms of humanity, it is only those who have accepted the gospel by faith and not by works who will experience the completion of God's salvific plan. Paul's gospel appears to be replacing Judaism with its traditions and rituals. It nullifies the requirement to be circumcised physically as cited in Rom. 2:28-29), for justification is by faith without works (Rom. 3:28-30).

## Conclusion

In Paul's development of justification by faith in the text, he points out that God shows no partiality with Jews and Gentiles. He uses justification to emphasise that both Jews and Gentiles can have access to salvation by faith. Moving away from the core expectation of Judaism where justification is by works, he negates it and replaces it with justification by faith. I do not believe that Paul is attempting to wage war on Judaism; rather preference is for the view that he is seeking to bring Jews and Gentiles together into the faith arena where they can experience the righteousness of God.

There are implications to Paul's teachings on justification by faith resulting from the language and imagery used. There is ambiguity surrounding his thoughts on the "righteousness of God", leaving commentators and scholars with conflicting interpretations. I find Dunn's interpretation on the "righteousness of God" most acceptable and relevant to the text, since it takes into account the activity of God expressed in his faithfulness in keeping his covenantal promise, and his gift of righteousness bestowed on humanity (Dunn, 1988, 41). Another implication pertains to his quotation from Hab.2:4, where there is ambiguity in the translation of faith, relating to the faithfulness of God or the faithfulness of the believer. It has to be assumed that in the context of the text Paul is referring to the faithfulness of the believer because righteousness is by faith.

Regarding Paul's work on justification, it is not absolutely clear that Paul is saying that justification is synonymous with salvation. Faith might be a prerequisite of justification and salvation a product of justification. Cranfield suggests that faith is not prior to salvation but I believe there must be an element of faith in the individual, a gift from God, before a response to the gospel is made. By denying that faith is not prior to salvation, Cranfield is protecting Paul's argument that justification is not by works or merit but God's gift, without establishing other strands to Paul's thoughts (Cranfield, 1975, 90) where it is the act of obedience. Paul is not teaching a doctrine of justification by faith in Rom.1:16-17; that doctrine is reminiscent of the Reformation. In the context of the epistle to the Romans, Paul is pointing out that the life of the person who accepts the gospel will be transformed and the new life lived will be in hope of eternal salvation.

### 3.2 Election

“We know that all things work together for good for those who love God, who are called according to his purpose” Rom. 8: 28.

When Paul says, “we know”, he may be drawing on Old Testament experiences when God delivered Israel from various hardship and afflictions, in order to reveal his purpose for them and his sovereignty. He may also be reflecting on the experiences of the early church, the sufferings, the persecutions and even the martyrdom of Stephen. Paul knows that out of these experiences the Christian movement grew stronger and stronger. Those who are faithful in responding to the salvation God freely offers can be reassured that the outcome of all things now and in the future is good because God decides the outcome.

When Paul assures his audience that “all things” work for their good, he is implying nothing can really harm those who love God. It is likely that Paul is using the text to emphasise another facet of the power of God in the gospel by declaring that God is in control of all things in the universe. Some scholars believe that when the “all things” is taken as the subject of the verb “work together” then the outcome is at God’s mercy (Barrett, 1991, 158; (Käsemann, 1980, 243).

Paul sees the respondents to the gospel as the ones who love God. The sufferings they experience will paradoxically encourage them to persevere in hope of the glory to be revealed as cited in v. 18. Cranfield agrees that the adverse things experienced by those who love God will be profitable to assist them in their salvation and relationship with him (Cranfield, 1975, 428). Paul provides assurance to comfort those elected in 8:28-30. Those called “according to God’s divine purpose” are those predestined or elected to salvation (Luther, 1976, 28-29). Murray recognises a further reason for the word “purpose” as continued confirmation of God’s action in their calling (Murray, 1968, 315). Cranfield believes the word “purpose”, as used by Paul, is “God’s eternal purpose of mercy”, used similarly in the Old Testament to mean “the council” or “purpose of God”, as cited in Ps. 33:11 and Isa. 14:26 (Cranfield, 1975, 430-431). Paul’s point that the elect are saved according to God’s purpose and not by chance is also cited in Eph. 1:11. He is implying that no one comes to salvation unless they are called by God in accordance with his plan to redeem mankind.



## The image of his Son

“For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the first born within a large family” (v.29). “And those whom predestined he also called; and those whom he called he also justified; and those whom he justified he also glorified” (v.30).

Cranfield believes vv.29-30 is best understood as supporting v.28. The interpretation of “foreknew” or “foreknowledge” denotes God’s gracious eternal election (Cranfield, 1975, 431-433). As Christ is glorified in eternity, Paul expects the believer to experience not only a final glorification but to embrace transformed life that is progressive conformity to the image of Christ (Cranfield, 1975, 433). The glory of the believer has already been foreordained by God, v. 29, hence the use of the past tense, even though the glory is still in the future and as cited in v. 18, a glory yet to be revealed. Murray suggests that since “glorified” in v.30 is in the past tense, it is proleptic, implying it is certain to be accomplished (Murray, 1968, 321). Here, different interpretations have been placed on the meaning of “foreknowledge” and “predestination”. However, those who God foreknew would believe; he foreknew them as his by faith (Murray, 1968, 315-316). This makes predestination to be conditioned by faith and also obliterates the difference between “foreknowledge” and “predestination”. It is argued that “the faith God foresees is the faith he creates”. Murray suggests that this view should be rejected on exegetical grounds because “foreknew” does not refer to the foresight of faith. It is God who predestinates, calls, justifies and glorifies. Paul uses the word “foreknew” to focus attention on the distinguishing love of God by which human beings are elected and not the destination of those elected, except to be conformed to the likeness of Christ Jesus (Murray 1968, 317-319). Käsemann does not believe that Paul’s reference “to be conformed to the image of his Son” in v.29 speaks of a future participation in the resurrected body of Christ as cited in Phil. 3:10. Rather, Paul is speaking of a present salvation by the use of the aorist tense, (the salvation of the future has already taken place in the present time) where believers are made like him in baptism and “in this earthly existence”, and the focus is not merely that of the anticipated exalted Christ (Käsemann 1973, 244, 245). According to Jewett, conforming to the image of the son, points to a present and not to a future transformation, and this fits in with the

context of current suffering and takes into consideration the aorist verbs in the Pauline language (Jewett, 2007, 529). Dunn disagrees with Käsemann's stance and acknowledges the reference to conformity to the Son to be the future outcome of the process of transformation of the life of the believer into the likeness of Christ. It is conformation to the image of the risen Christ that brings humanity back into the likeness of God. Paul has the Old Testament in mind as he speaks of Adam, who was created in the image and likeness of God but lost it through disobedience in contrast to Christ, who was the eschatological Adam and image of God, retaining it through obedience (Dunn, 1988, 483, 495). I agree with Jewett that Paul is not using the expression "conforming to the image of the son of God" to establish the doctrine of predestination but to provide assurance to his readers that their lives and work are significant in God's plan for restoring the whole creation by their "conforming to the image of Christ" his son (Jewett, 2007, 529). The message of justification is correlated to the predestination statement since it destroys human will and piety. Although Käsemann and Dunn have subtly different views on when the believer is formed in the image of God, this does not detract from the calling for transformation. The new life, new likeness and image starts at conversion and continues to develop in the believer and finally is to be fully completed at the parousia.

In v.30 Paul speaks of four stages in the salvific plan to achieve God's purpose for the believer. God predestinates, calls, justifies and glorifies. Paul speaks of God's will for humanity before creation to respond to his call, experience his righteousness continuously through maintaining faith in the gospel and living a transformed life until the final glorification. It is those who are called and respond who will experience these stages leading to the final outcome and it is those who love God who will respond to the gospel call. Paul is asserting the fullness of the gospel and that "response" follows the "call". It is unlikely that he is proposing anything other than salvation for those who freely respond to a gospel that is universal to Jews and Gentiles. There is no quantitative discrimination of the number called or rejected in the text. I support the view of Barth that predestination is not "the quantitative limitation of God's action, but its qualitative definition" (Barth, 1933, 346). This now leads to the question of why God chooses some and rejects others.

### **Double predestination**

Although traditional supporters of the doctrine of predestination cite Paul's reference to Esau and Jacob, as biblical authority for election and rejection, it is not a widely held view.

“Even before they had been born or had done anything good or bad (so that God's purpose of election might continue, not by works but by his call) she was told. The elder shall serve the younger. ... I have loved Jacob but Esau I have hated”, Rom. 9:10-13; Mal. 1:2-3.

The apparent theme in this text is that those called were chosen by God before creation and their calling is not dependent on any merits. Jesus mirrored this when he announced, “... I chose you” in Jn. 15:16. It is unlikely that Paul is portraying a God of love and hatred in the case of Esau. Paul is using his knowledge of the Old Testament texts to provide an exposition of the sovereignty and power of God to will what he wants. He is the God of both Jacob and Esau. Is it really about salvation and the destiny of these two individuals? Is God really condemning Esau to eternal destruction? No. Paul uses the quotation to explain God's election of Jacob as the chosen nation and not Esau for his salvific plan. Paul might be highlighting the purpose of election of Israel, not ignoring the fact that the Messiah came from the tribe of Judah with the gift of salvation for all humanity.

In contrast to God's choice of Jacob, God chooses those willing to accept the gospel by faith. God is not influenced by, nor is he reliant on the world's legal systems; he reverses the tradition and chooses “the older to serve the younger”. Cranfield sums it up adequately, “God's purpose of election is wholly dependent on God himself who calls (Cranfield, 1979, 478). As Esau and Jacob shared God's space on earth, the same is expected of the elect and the un-elect. The interpretation of commentators does differ for this text, despite acknowledgment that the concept of double predestination is present in Rom. 9. Paul's reference to Esau and Jacob demonstrates that the calling of God is not dependent on “works” or “natural descent” but that “God's selective purpose of election might continue” (Murray, 1968, 14; Jewett, 2007, 578-9). Paul knowing that the Jews can appeal to the Old Testament for legitimacy to justification, argues in the text, that legitimacy, status or heritage does not guarantee the realisation of the promise despite being linked to Isaac, Gen.21:12, Rom. 9:6-7. Salvation is dependent on a call from God alone, to whomever he chooses to call. It is unlikely that Paul wants to use double predestination to predicate election and damnation but rather to reveal that the

calling comes from God and therefore no one should boast of their unmerited salvation.

### **God's character**

"... is there injustice on God's part? By no means! For he says to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I have mercy... compassion on whom I have compassion" in Rom 9:14-15.

There is a parallel in verse 15 and 8:30, God will do according to his will only; he is not unjust in what he does. Paul applies the analogy of the potter in vv.20-21 to emphasise God's right as the creator, to freely choose of his creation, those he will choose to elect and those he will reject; it is his unquestionable right. Hendriksen speaks of God's eternal purpose to elect those who will be "recipients of special grace" and "everlasting salvation" and likewise, those who also by his "special grace", pass over to eternal punishment for their sins (Hendriksen, 1980, 320). Barth articulates in his commentary that God's choice of Jacob over Esau does not make him unrighteous; he is still the God of Esau, the God who "rejects, in order that he may elect". His righteousness is eternal (Barth, 1933, 349-350). God's saving work is evidently bound to his free will to save Jews and Gentiles. Paul speaks of the salvation of all Israel: "And so all Israel will be saved..." Rom. 11: 26.

Paul's hope is that despite Israel's rejection of the Gospel, they will by God's grace receive salvation, once the Gentiles have received the gospel. Paul does not mention the quota of Gentiles who are elected (v. 25); neither is it clear if he means literally all Israel as a nation prior to the final time. He is optimistic that Israel will be saved. The "all Israel" could mean, "every Jew", "the Jews living prior to the end-time time" or "the elected Jews". Some commentators believe Paul is referring to the spiritual Israel, that is the church consisting of the "elect of Israel" and the "Gentiles who have been elected in Christ" (Barth, 1933, 415). Although, within the context of the epistle, Israel could be made up of the elected Jews and Gentiles, it is unlikely that this is the case, since in the present text, Paul is clearly focusing on the Jews. However, if "all" is to be taken literally then it means every Jew is elected within the nation and despite their unbelief, will, through the grace and mercy of God and his irrevocable covenant, be saved. Taking into context Paul's main theme in the epistle that Jews and Gentiles will be saved by faith in the gospel, it is possible that the uncertainty

arises from Paul's choice of words. The reference to "all Israel" might simply refer to all those who have responded to the gospel; otherwise even those who reject the gospel would be saved against their will.

Barrett believes that Paul's quote from the Old Testament "this is my covenant with them, when I take away their sins" in Rom.11:27 is to reinforce the promise that God is not finished with Israel but will prepare a new covenant of salvation for them (Barrett, 1991, 207). Paul appears to be optimistic of the salvation of the Jews and this could be linked to the memory of his own conversion, from being devoted to Judaism to being committed to Christianity. Based on his conversion, it could be assumed that not all Jews will accept the gospel, but like Paul, only those who by faith in obedience respond, will receive it.

## **Conclusion**

In the context of the epistle to the Romans, Paul speaks of predestination and election but not as a separate doctrine. His focus is on the salvific plan and Jews and Gentiles are called by God to respond to it. Those who respond are the ones who love God and are promised security; no harm will come to them, despite their sufferings. They are assured of a future glorification. Paul is not advocating a quantitative election and rejection; instead the text reveals the sovereignty and righteousness of God to make decisions according to his purpose, independently of any human activity. The double predestination is used by Paul to show that God's gift of salvation is not based on legitimacy, status or heritage. God is just and gives it freely and to whoever he chooses. The recipients can only accept it in humility, for there is no room for boasting. Paul is clearly stating that salvation is for those who respond to the gospel; it is not for those who do not love God and refuse to respond to him.

## **Chapter 4 – Salvation for All?**

### **4.1 Introduction**

Scholars have used certain texts in Paul's epistle to the Romans to support their argument for the universal and inclusive approaches to salvation. In this chapter I will argue that Paul is not advocating salvation for all who have heard the gospel and neither is he suggesting access to salvation for non-Christians who believe in God, without the knowledge of Christ. I will examine exegetically key biblical texts in Rom. 1:5, 1:19-20; 3:23; 4:3; 5:18-19; 11:25-26 with reference to various commentaries, to capture Paul's thoughts on the scope of salvation. The fate of those who refuse to believe the gospel is beyond the remit of this research.

### **4.2 Salvation for all**

The theological arguments for universal salvation rest on biblical texts referring to God's love, his grace and his desire that all will receive salvation. For this part of the chapter, I will consider the texts used to argue universal salvation and discover whether or not Paul is developing a theme of universal salvation. I will begin with Rom. 1: 5.

#### **Obedience and faith**

"... the obedience of faith among all the Gentiles for the sake of his name" Rom. 1:5

Paul highlights the universal scope of salvation in his use of "obedience of faith among all the Gentiles" in this text, declaring that the gospel is to be preached to bring about faithful obedience of the Gentiles for the glory of God. At this early stage, Paul expresses the importance of faith and its relationship to obedience. He might be implying faith as the product of obedience to the call of God in the gospel. It is the obedient ones who will respond to the gospel and in responding they will appropriate their faith. Barrett refers to "obedience of faith" as a "faith obedience", resulting from one gratefully accepting the gospel of God in Christ. He believes Paul is expressing two separate things: obedience to Christ and having faith in him. He dismisses Cranfield's interpretation as "obedience which consists in faith" whereby faith is an act of obedience to God and encased in it; is the desire to obey God in all things (Barrett, 1991, 23; Cranfield, 1975, 66-67). The view of these two commentators

should not be dismissed. In both interpretations, faith is a significant important factor and Paul, knowing its centrality to the gospel, uses it in various texts within the epistle. Cranfield's interpretation more readily reflects Paul's thoughts that faith is activated in obedience to the gospel. Faith and obedience, although separate attributes, in this context, ought not to be separated. Paul's use of the adjective "all" expresses a universal scope to salvation but throughout his "salvation" argument, the limitation is seen in that the beneficiaries are those who in obedience to God accept the gospel by faith in Christ Jesus. The gospel is to be declared among all Gentiles; at this point, he has deliberately excluded the Jews because the focus is not on them. As the apostle to the Gentiles, he sees it necessary to impress the importance of reaching out to the Gentiles in the nations of the Roman Empire in his time, with the message that Gentiles are included into God's salvific plan. He later brings the Jews into the picture, when he explicitly declares in v.16-17 that salvation is available inclusively to everyone who has faith.

When he speaks of all Gentiles, it appears clear that he is focusing on non-Jews. However, the King James's translation uses "all nations" and this is problematic because all nations could be inclusive of Jews and Gentiles. In the context of this text, I believe Paul is deliberately making a specific address to the Gentile Christians; a view Ziesler supports (Ziesler, 1989, 64).

Paul provides the reason why the Gentiles should be brought into "obedience of faith", that is, "for the sake of his name", (this principle also applies to the Jews). It is for God's glory and this is reinforced in Rom. 8:28b; the last clause reads, "... according to his purpose". Once again, Paul's choice of words may lead to different conclusions. However, in the context of both texts, those who receive the gospel, do so for his name sake, which is for his purpose. It is part of the salvific plan that obedience and faith is a crown of glory to God as he is honoured by humanity.

### **Adam and Christ**

Although Paul is the main apostle of the Gentiles he preaches salvation for both Jews and Gentiles and in providing reasons why salvation is necessary, he makes a universal acclaim in this text:

"Since all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" Rom. 3:23.

Paul gives an image of universal corruption where the whole of humanity, Jews and Gentiles are in a state of depravity, fallen from righteousness and no one is in right standing with God. He cites v.10 to strengthen his argument that there is not even one righteous person. The Jews are not left in any doubt of their position; they are in the same condition as the Gentiles, despite having the Mosaic Law. Succinctly, he is denouncing righteousness by works. It is a shocking awakening for the Jews, for it is replacing the traditional belief in doing good works, with one of faith in the gospel of Jesus Christ. It is the only way out of their present state. I support Dunn's view that Paul takes the Jews off their pedestal and places them on "the same level of their common creatureliness" (Dunn, 1988, 168). That is, both Jews and Gentiles are dependent on God for salvation, which can only be attained by exercising faith. Paul uses the text to completely rule out any advantage of the Jews over non-Jews.

Paul uses the past tense for the action, "all have sinned", enunciating a general principle that fits with the unrighteous action of Adam, which brought sin to bear on all humanity. In contrast, Paul uses the present tense for "fall short of the glory of God" implying that as long as one is in a state of sin, there is a "nakedness" or "ugliness" because the glory of God is not present. Although he uses the present tense, he may have in mind an on-going glory to be experienced by believers in the present time. In addition, to an eschatological glory yet to be revealed as cited in Rom.8:18, Barrett believes Paul uses the present tense to point out that humanity now lacks what he might have had, if Adam had not sinned (Barrett, 1991, 71). This is a legitimate assumption which leads me to argue that if humanity chooses to believe the gospel by faith, it is possible that the glory, the right standing and the former relationship that Paul speaks of can now be restored. As he speaks, he carries the bigger picture of the historic - salvation plan and regularly refers to the Old Testament. He adds to his argument by drawing a contrast between the actions of the first Adam and the second Adam, Christ, with focus on the action of each and their effect on humanity. There is also the scope of the effects of the obedience of Jesus in Paul's use of the words "all" and "many" in the texts.

Paul speaks of the sin of Adam and the righteousness of Jesus:

"Therefore just as one man's trespass led to condemnation for all, so one man's act of righteousness leads to justification for all" Rom. 5:18.



On examination, it is immediately apparent that Paul is pointing out the outcome of two different actions and effects. Adam's sin is the cause of condemnation (*katákrima*) for all, that is, the whole human race. The word "led" is used in the past tense, affirming that the effect of sin has already tainted every human being. In contrast the righteous act (*dikaiōma*) of Christ "leads to" righteousness (*dikaiosynē*) for all. The words "leads to" are present tense and imply that justification is continuously available to all. There is a degree of continuity in the verb "leads to" and since men and women are still being justified there is some uncertainty as to whether every human being will accept the salvation available as a result of the action of Christ, even though it is available to all (Cranfield, 1975, 290). Taking the overall theme of Paul's epistle, it is likely that he never lost sight of the purpose of the gospel and the importance of faith. Although, faith is not mentioned in this text, it must not be forgotten that the "righteousness of God" in Christ Jesus is revealed in the gospel to those who appropriate their faith.

Paul speaks of the "all" that are affected by Adam's sin and the "all" that benefit from the righteousness of Christ. However, it is unlikely that the "all" relating to Adam co-extends to the "all" relating to Christ. Paul is not saying that the effect of their actions have the same impact. In fact, it is unlikely that he is dealing with an anthropological issue here; rather, he has in mind the abounding grace of God manifested in the ontological work of Christ. Paul is using his argument to point out the significance of the greater power in the righteousness of Christ against the power of sin.

There is much debate on Paul's use of the words "all" and "many", as it is possible that the "all" in v.18 corresponds to the "many" in v.15 (Barrett, 1991, 108). Nothing in the text provides clues to arithmetical numbers. According to Barrett, Paul's use of "all", might mean "all who are on Adam's side" as those who choose sin and face condemnation and the "all who are on Christ's side" are the ones who choose righteousness and will be saved (Barrett, 1991, 108-109). This interpretation is implying that Paul means the "all" who are on Adam's side are the many who reject salvation and the "all" on Christ's side are the many who accept salvation. The alternative interpretation posed by Barrett implies universal sin and universal salvation arising from what he describes as a "dialectical duality" where the human race is considered to be "in Adam", cut off from God and condemned to death. Yet, by faith this human race can be seen to be "in Christ" and redeemed by nothing else

but the mercies of God (Barrett, 1991, 108-109). Both interpretations carry a degree of merit, but the latter argument is closer to what I believe Paul has in mind. I believe his use of the term “in Adam” is an image of Adam’s fatherhood and as father of the human race; every human being has his DNA and suffers from the consequences of his sin. Likewise, Christ the new Adam, brings life and through his work on the cross to all those who believe carry his DNA. He has closed the gap of separation from God that was created by Adam, for all those who are willing to accept his offer of salvation.

The “all” is “not an eternally unalterable quantity” according to Cranfield. Paul sees it in terms of what Christ has done for all of humanity. It is not an indication that all will actually accept and share in the offer of salvation (Cranfield, 1975, 290). Murray holds a similar view to Cranfield’s, that Paul is not interested in the numerical quantity of those condemned and those justified but the “parallelism” of the acts; the one trespass of Adam led to condemnation and the one righteous act of Christ led to salvation for all who are justified (Murray, 1968, 203). Jewett enunciates that the righteous act of Christ has overturned the “Adamic damnation” but only believers are included within the scope of his righteousness (Jewett, 2007, 385). I support these interpretations of the text because having a numerical connotation would not strengthen Paul’s theology but would negate the power of the gospel to save all. Paul’s intention is to contrast the acts and effects of both the first Adam and the last Adam, showing that the one action of Adam brought death on the human race but the one righteous act of Christ brought life to all humanity. I agree with Murray that Paul is not advocating inclusive universalism in v.18, for there is an “interpretation of restrictive implication” though it is not explicitly implied, that can be assumed in the text (Murray, 1968, 203). Paul is seeking to get across to his audience the extent of God’s grace and the power that lies in the salvation he offers. The “all” is inclusive of Jews and Gentiles, male and female and when read along -side v.19 it becomes much clearer that Paul has in mind, the many who believe.

Paul uses v.19 to clarify and confirm his statement in verse 18:

“For just as by the one man’s disobedience the many were made sinners, so by one man’s obedience the many will be made righteous” Rom.5:19.

In the preceding text Paul uses “trespass”; here he uses “disobedience”, probably with the intention to emphasise Adam’s action as sin, and hence, “the many were made sinners”. He uses obedience here instead of righteousness to indicate that Christ’s obedience is a righteous act and many are made righteous as a result of his action. Paul uses “many” instead of “all” as used in v.18, meaning the many that are justified. Luther believes the “many” is used by Paul to show that the emphasis is not on numbers but on the power of sin and grace (Luther, 1976, 98). I agree with Luther for it is Paul’s agenda to bring to his audience’s attention the work of Christ and what he has made available for them. The many made righteous are those Jews and non-Jews who have accepted the gospel. Jewett admits this view is not held by Bonda, who believes the “all” in v. 18 has the same meaning as the “many” in v.19 and should carry the same universal meaning as the “many” in v.15 (Jewett 2007, 387). Paul continues to use certain terms because of the direction in which he is taking his argument and the purpose for relaying it. I believe Bonda’s interpretation obscures what Paul is attempting to express. He uses the many in v.15, “... the many died through the one man’s sin”. Bonda is concentrating on quantity and not on the quality, that is, the divine grace and power of God to undo what Adam did, through the last Adam. The main exegetical problem in this text is focused on Paul’s use of the word “all” which could be interpreted literally or metaphorically. Paul switches from “all” to “many” in v.19. He is scarcely thinking of two different groups of people in the adjectives used and neither is he positing universalism within the context of the theme of his epistle. He is proclaiming the gospel that allows those willing to accept it to be justified.

I will use this analogy to explain what I believe Paul is articulating in the texts. Assuming the whole human race is infected with a deadly disease, the medical profession develops a cure, making it available for the whole human race to be cured. It is available for all because all are infected but there is no guarantee that all will accept the cure. It is likely some will not believe it will cure them and because of their disbelief, will die from this deadly disease, while others are willing to believe and accept that the medication will cure them. This is similar to Paul’s analogy of Adam’s deadly trespass affecting the whole human race and the righteousness of Christ which offers life to all those affected. Some Jews and Gentiles will accept the gospel,

while others will choose to reject it and face the wrath of God despite salvation being available for all.

### **Jews and Gentiles**

Paul continues to speak of salvation for all but with some emphasis on the salvation of the Jews in Rom. 11.

“...A hardening has come upon part of Israel until the full number of the Gentiles has come in” v. 25 and, “so all Israel will be saved”, v. 26.

There is ambiguity in the text resulting from the Pauline language. Paul speaks of “part of Israel”, but it is not clear which part he has in mind. It could be the remnant or the ones who God had known would not believe, just like Esau. He refers to the “full number of the Gentiles” but it is not clear what that number signifies. The full number could relate to the number of Gentiles elected for salvation; all Gentiles who accept the gospel or just the whole nations of Gentiles. In the context of the theme of the epistle, I assume Paul is referring to those Gentiles who believe the gospel. The same problem occurs with “all Israel” but Paul may have had in mind all of the elect in Israel; all those who respond favourably to the gospel or the whole nation of Israel. Barrett does not believe Paul is speaking of individual Israelites but Israel as a whole (Barrett, 1991, 206). Käsemann acknowledges that the text does not designate the number of individuals who will be saved or the plurality of the people (Käsemann, 1973, 313). Some interpreters propose that Paul’s reference to “all Israel” might include only the elect Jews and Gentiles or that it refers to the new spiritual Israel, that is, the church today. Murray suggests such interpretations should be refuted in terms of the context in which Paul writes. Paul is speaking of the unfolding of God’s plan in relation to salvation history, whereby Jews and Gentiles will be saved. Israel will be restored and have access to God’s salvation (Murray, 1968, 96-97).

The text is not clear but, in consideration of the two preceding chapters, it is more likely that Paul is referring to Israel as a nation and not individual Jews, a view held by Barrett. Paul does not provide any insight into what he means in relation to how many Jews and Gentiles will be saved. I believe the key theme of the epistle will help to decipher Paul’s thoughts on the text. He advocates salvation for both Jews and Gentiles. In the analogy of Adam and Christ, the gospel is the focus of salvation for

all who believe. Paul has left a trail which we should follow. He is not contradicting himself when he asserts, “all Israel will be saved”. He is not implying universal salvation for all Jews while delimiting the number of Gentiles who will be saved. He has in mind the Old Testament covenantal promise to the Jews, as cited “...my covenant with them, when I take away their sins” v.27. Both Isaiah and Jeremiah prophesied about the promise; see Isa. 27:9 and Jer.31:31. Paul is moving away from the old covenant that is now subsumed into the new covenant of the New Testament. With the work of the Holy Spirit, the new covenant will be written on their hearts, implying spiritual relational restoration for those who accept it. I endorse Murray’s interpretation of the text; Paul has gone beyond ethnicity and numbers; he is advocating a salvation that fulfils the promise of salvation. Paul carries the hope that in the future there will be a spiritual awakening for all Israel without affirming the number that will be saved. There can be no favouritism or special deal for the Jews, despite God keeping his covenantal promise with them. In Romans 1:16, salvation is for both Jews and Gentiles without the keeping of the Mosaic Law. Paul reminds his audience in Rom.2:11, that “God shows no partiality”. The new covenant is clearly an inclusive covenant for both Jews and Gentiles.

When Paul speaks of the scope of salvation for both Jews and Gentiles to participate by faith, he does not specifically mention that everyone will enjoy eternal life. Although he mentions that “all Israel will be saved”, he admits in 11:23 that there is a possibility of some remaining in a state of unbelief (Dunn, 1988, 691). If this is the case, Paul does not intend his words to be taken literally and I believe he has Rom. 9:6 in his thoughts, “...not all Israelites truly belong to Israel” for it is those who believe who will be counted as true Israelites; true descendants of Abraham, heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ (Rom. 8:17). Paul has the personal experience of rejecting the Christian faith until his conversion; hence, his strong hope that in the future all the people of Israel will have a similar opportunity to accept the gospel. He is clear that this hope of salvation for Israel is in this life and not beyond the grave. For beyond the grave, lies damnation for unbelievers, as hinted in his anguish over the thought of his fellow Jews not responding to the gospel. Although he has not specifically mentioned damnation, he implies it in his willingness to be separated from Christ if such an act would lead to their salvation; cited in Rom. 9:2-3. His anguish might arise from the fear of punishment awaiting unbelievers at the Parousia

and he does not want this fate for his people. He wants them to exercise explicit faith where they believe in their heart and verbally confess their profession of faith (Rom 10:11).

#### **4.3 Salvation for Christians and non-Christians**

I will examine exegetically the key texts that some scholars draw on to support their case for an inclusive salvation which I believe contradicts Paul's views on salvation.

“For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. Ever since the creation of the world his eternal power and divine nature, invisible though they are, have been understood and seen through the things he has made. So they are without excuse” Rom. 1: 19-20.

To grasp what Paul has in mind, one has to link the preceding verse where Paul reveals the sinful state of humanity, the reasons for deserving the wrath of God and he provides explanations why they will have no legitimate excuse. God makes himself known to everyone through his creation. According to Dunn, the cosmos reveals what is to be revealed about God and he alone wills the revelation so that they know of him (Dunn, 1988, 57). Dunn supports the view that Paul is establishing a natural theology where divine revelation is not necessary but Barrett rejects this view and suggests Paul's argument is “an accusation” to point out the knowledge of God “in them”, that is, in their minds and conscience though they have not acknowledged him as God (Barrett, 1991, 35). If Barrett is right, then this would be the cause of God's wrath, human beings rejecting God despite the knowledge of himself revealed to them. It also fits in with Paul's argument of the conscience of those without the Mosaic Law in Rom. 2: 14-16. This knowledge of God is general revelation available to everyone, both Jews and non-Jews. No one can deny knowing that there is a greater power, a Being, outside of creation. The knowledge Paul speaks about is a revelation by God and humans are dependent on God for all that is to be known of him and not on nature and human reasoning. Paul does not say what is revealed in the text until v.20, where he speaks of the revelation of the power of God and his divine nature in his creation. Dunn's suggestion that the revelation of God to humanity through his creation is not necessarily a “saving knowledge” is in line with the context of the text (Dunn, 1988, 57). Paul is not dealing with special revelation; neither is he asserting salvation at this point of his argument in vv.19-20.

He is making it clear that the gospel is not the only source of knowing God as the creator, for the invisible God reveals himself in all creation, so that humanity might be “without excuse”. This completely rules out any escape from God’s wrath, some having received this knowledge of God, continue to dishonour him. Fitzmyer acknowledges that Paul is not expecting the Gentiles to have knowledge via a “positive primal revelation” (or by faith), since the evidence of the omnipotence of God and his divine character is mirrored in his creation (Fitzmyer 1993, 835). This argument dismisses the view that supports implicit faith; since the evidence of creation is visible, there is no need for faith. As there is no evidence of a saving knowledge, it is unlikely that those who acknowledge God through his creation will be saved by that alone. Paul is asserting that both Jews and Gentiles should be aware of God’s supernatural power above everything else, otherwise their conscience will be a witness against them.

Rom. 1:19-20 could be read alongside 2:14-16 since there is a connection:

“When Gentiles, who do not possess the law, do instinctively, what the law requires... (2:14.) They show that what the law requires is written in their hearts,...their own conscience bears witness; and their conflicting thoughts will accuse or...excuse them (v.15). ... God through Jesus Christ will judge the secret thoughts of all (v.16)”.

Paul is referring to the Gentiles who are unaware of the Mosaic Law. If they honour God by doing morally what the Mosaic Law demands without knowledge of it, it is counted as if they had the Law. They can only do what the law requires because God writes it in their hearts. Paul still has vv. 19 -20 in mind; they have general revelation. Käsemann suggests they have an “analogue” to the law and are held accountable to it, as the Jews are to their written Law (Käsemann , 1973, 64). This fits with Paul’s assertion that those who have the knowledge are without excuse. Human beings can choose to honour God or dishonour him by doing right or wrong. When Paul speaks of their conscience acting either as a witness or accuser of them on the day of judgement, he is reaffirming that God will use the conscience to be the witness providing the legal evidence by which they will be charged or acquitted. Dodd rightly suggests that Paul analogises the conscience acting as Judge, and that there is no excuse for Jews and Gentiles who sin by failing to honour God (Dodd, 1971, 62). This interpretation is rightly reiterated by Schreiner who argues that the Gentiles have a “two-fold witness” to the moral standard of the law. They have the written law

on their hearts and their conscience to regulate the acceptable behaviour required and be a witness of behaviour retrospectively (Schreiner, 1998, 123). No thoughts are hidden from the omniscient God. Paul is not implying that those who simply acknowledge God will be redeemed. This is not his intention, since faith is central to accepting the gospel in which a greater and more specific revelation of the power of God through Christ is made. The acquittal of those who have acknowledged God from the revelation provided denotes their escape from retribution and this applies to both Jews and Gentiles. Paul's reference to general revelation and the conscience is not a qualifying factor for salvation for those who have no knowledge of Christ. He advocates salvation by faith in the gospel for Jews and Gentiles of the New Testament dispensation. This might seem contradictory when he refers to the Old Testament Patriarch Abraham, as already mentioned, who was justified by faith though not knowing of Christ in the epistle:

"...Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness" Rom. 4:3.

Paul wants to emphasise to the Jews and Gentile Christians in Rome that as faith was necessary for Abraham to please God, similarly, it is necessary for them and that Abraham's positive response to God led to God declaring him righteous (Gen. 15:6). This faith of Abraham which led to his salvation is not as a result of general revelation; it is much more than implicit faith, as he had several special revelations from God which might have helped to increase his faith as God unfolded the bigger picture of a future nation, despite not knowing of Christ. Paul is also pointing to an individualistic faith in this text, thereby hinting that salvation is accessible to all individuals who accept it by faith. Käsemann supports the view that faith is personal. He argues, "it is the act and decision of the individual person" and "there can be no faith by proxy and no implicit faith" (Käsemann 1973 109). This affirms the case that when 4:3 is read in conjunction with v.24, it should not be assumed that Paul is implying salvation for those who believe in God only, as Abraham did when he says, "“ ... It will be reckoned to us who believe in him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead” Rom. 4:24. If such was Paul's intention, it would be redundant for him to mention the resurrection of Jesus. It is a key part of the argument, as he wants his audience to believe in God, not merely because Abraham believed but because of the gospel of Christ, that is, his death and resurrection, wherein lies the power of God to save. Paul carefully plays with his words in order not to separate faith from the



gospel. In referring back to Rom. 1:17, it is clear that Paul's articulation is that, as the righteousness of God was revealed to Abraham in the promises as he believed by faith, similarly, the righteousness of God is revealed in the gospel to those who believe by faith. Barrett believes the text refers to a "God who counts faith as righteousness" and that our faith is no different from Abraham's, for it is in the same God (Barrett, 1991, 92-93). His argument is compelling but requires some clarification for the faith that we have is a trusting faith like Abraham's but the faith is not for the same "direct" reason. I say "direct" because Abraham and all believers believe that God will keep his promises, but in addition, believers' exhibit saving faith by believing in the gospel of Christ Jesus and sharing in the transformation it makes to their lives. He also uses the past tense in "reckoned" implying as, I believe, a futuristic element when the salvific plan will be completed in God's glorification of believers.

### **4.3 Conclusion**

Paul enunciates the centrality of faith for receiving salvation. His theology is one of salvation for all Jews and Gentiles. Throughout the epistle he emphasises the universalistic nature of sin and God's universal salvific plan, accessible to all who will in faith accept it. In all the scriptural texts examined, there is no evidence that Paul is positing, a final salvation for all humanity in this life and beyond. Neither does he support any form of salvation without knowledge of Christ Jesus. He indicts Israel for depending on their privileged covenant position to obtain justification. He does not extenuate their sins but places them in the same position as Gentile sinners. Nevertheless, he asserts God's righteousness in the power of the gospel where all can experience the blessings of a free salvation. Paul is not violating Judaism when he introduces the gospel but seeks to point out its weakness in terms of salvation by works. He explicates the gospel using language, metaphors and images that his audience understand, so that his message is understood. He speaks of explicit faith, a faith tied up in the gospel of Christ Jesus. The conclusion of his argument in this chapter, despite the complexities surrounding some of the texts, signifies salvation through Christ Jesus only.

## Chapter 5 - Final conclusion

This research study reveals ambiguities in both the theological and biblical arguments for the scope of salvation throughout Paul's epistle to the Romans. I started off objectively with a desire to know Paul's view on salvation and whether he supported any of the four approaches to salvation classified by scholars.

In undertaking the exegetical study, I soon realised that scholars often used the same or similar scriptures to justify the arguments for their own approach. And although the biblical text does carry a high degree of authority, the interpretations are flawed with their personal vested interest or religious preconceptions, creating hermeneutical problems for theology. This is not helped by Paul's unsystematic soteriological approach.

However, I do believe that by considering the overall context of the key theme of the epistle, it is possible to determine to a certain extent, Paul's thoughts on the scope of salvation. The argument for the doctrine of justification by faith, if considered in terms of the language, politics, culture and geography of the audience, reveals that Paul is not articulating a new doctrine based on any of the four approaches. Clearly, it is Paul's intention to bring to the attention of both Jews and Gentiles the universal causality of sin and the abundance of God's grace in providing salvation through faith in Christ Jesus, to be enjoyed in the present, and also eschatologically. The exegetical study does reveal complexities, resulting from the ambiguities in his text. In some case his intention is not clear and it is only by considering the context of Paul's epistle that a conclusion can be reached in some areas. Justification by faith is not a "stand-alone" doctrine; for Paul, it is the message of God's impartiality, where Jews and Gentiles alike are all helpless sinners and all in need of help from the same God. He takes justification by faith to a level beyond the threshold of Reformation theology; he opposes justification by meritorious works in Judaism and advocates justification by faith only by all people. He does not separate justification by faith from the gospel; it is embedded within it, for only by faith can one accept the gospel and experience the transformation that it offers. Commentators have not agreed unanimously on what Paul has in mind in his use of the term "righteousness of God" but I have argued that he uses the term to clearly reveal more fully who God is and what he does for humanity. He shows the faithfulness of God through the gospel and

the eternal hope of those who believe, as long as they live continuously by faith to share in the glory that God will reveal in them at the Parousia.

When Paul speaks of predestination and election, he uses it to help his audience understand and visualise the sovereignty, power and righteousness of God. In his majestic position he decides, he controls and does his will without question of justice or injustice, for he is God. His power is superior to all world powers (Jewett, 2006, 138-139). Paul is not supporting exclusivism, limiting the number of people who will be beneficiaries of God's grace; to do so, would go against the main thrust of the gospel. Justification by faith and election are facets of the gospel that are linked to reveal the mysteries of God and should not be considered separately; doing so would contract the sufficiency of God's grace and the wideness of his mercy, suggesting exclusivism. Paul's intention is to use Old Testament references to support his argument that salvation is available to Jews and Gentiles who believe the gospel of Christ by faith.

Justification by faith and the doctrine of election raises the question of the destiny of those who are not elected or saved. Although this study has not dealt with this, some scholars believe damnation for the unbeliever is inconsistent with biblical texts, since there are no biblical teachings that the soul of the unbeliever is immortal (Johnson, 2003, 87-98); however, there is evidence of judgement in Rom. 6:23. This form of exclusivism creates a divide between the elect and the un-elect and prompts the question why would a God who cares about the universe, create human beings for destruction (Moltman, 1996, 239-240). There is also the question of why a God of unlimited love would desire eternal torment for the unrepentant (Ward, 2004, 148-149)? Why would the creator destroy his creation, would he not continue to work on them until they are perfect? Scholars have used Romans to argue about the fate of those who have never heard the gospel, making it difficult for them to believe in faith (O'Collins, 2008, 129). Pinnock also raises the question of the un-evangelised and refers to various people in the Old Testament who were saved by faith despite not having any Christian revelation (Pinnock 1997, 158-160). Despite these arguments, the exegetical study does not provide any evidence that Paul supports exclusivism or inclusivism. Paul is concerned with the gospel of Christ Jesus and believes that the gospel must be preached and believed in. It is a gospel of explicit faith, wholly

dependent on God, offering salvation on a universal basis to all of humanity who will accept it by faith.

The exegesis reveals that Paul agrees that the nature of sin is universal, Rom. 1: 18-3:20, and that salvation is also universal. However, there is no evidence in the biblical text that Paul is suggesting final salvation for all as argued by universalists. Paul continues throughout the epistle to contend for salvation by faith as God reveals his righteousness in his gift of salvation to everyone. Yet, it is only those who accept it by faith, who will experience spiritual and moral transformation with an expectation of eternal hope. If salvation is in the present and in the future, then this creates a problem for the universalist who contemplates post-mortem salvation for some, forfeiting the present benefits for the eschatological. When Paul speaks of “all”, he is referring to all those who receive the gospel and not to the whole human race or those who believe in God alone without Christ. Despite the fact that salvation is universal, the view that every human being will be saved is not reflected in the epistle. If the universalism is correct, Paul would not have impressed on his audience the importance of believing: it is to “everyone who believes”. The universalist theory falters, because the authority of the scriptures does not endorse it. Paul endorses salvation by faith, transformed lives, taking on the image of Christ and living by faith in hope of eternal life. The epistle to the Romans is not about doctrine, it is Paul’s vehicle for promoting the gospel among Jews and Gentiles, emphasising the power of God; his impartiality, the presence of God’s revelation to every human being and purpose for humanity.

The inclusivists are correct in advocating salvation by faith in Christ Jesus but the view that salvation is available in other religions without the knowledge of Christ is not supported biblically and should be rejected. Clearly, Paul is declaring a salvation that can only be achieved through the gospel of Christ wherein the righteousness of God is revealed. Paul’s theology is Christocentric; there can be no salvation without faith in Christ in this life. If Paul had intended salvation post-mortem, the text would not express such urgency of preaching the gospel.

Having carried out this research and exegesis, the scope of salvation in Paul’s epistle to the Romans does not support limited or unlimited salvation. The scriptural texts used by scholars do carry a degree of merit yet none adequately provide a clear

interpretation of Paul's thoughts on the various approaches. The argument by exclusivists that salvation is limited is not what Paul intended to convey to his audience. His choice of imagery, analogies and metaphors are to provide a clearer understanding of the gospel that is achieved by faith in Christ.

All four approaches to salvation pose challenges; they either fail to fully appreciate the redeeming work of Christ for all humanity, since Paul asserts in his epistle God's desire to have all of humanity saved (Rom 5:18; 10:13). Or, they stretch the boundaries of God's salvific plan to either include all humanity enjoying eternal life and escaping the final judgement and damnation. They also misinterpret Paul's thoughts on faith to include implicit faith without the revelation of Christ.

The research suggests Paul is not advocating doctrines but is using every means possible as tools to emphasise the righteousness of God and the transforming power of salvation to declare righteous all those who believe without human contributions. However, there still remain some areas of uncertainties in the biblical texts relating to whether or not "faith" is prior to hearing the gospel, the fate of the un-evangelised and the salvation of "all Israel". More research and more engagement with the original Greek text need to be undertaken, in order to gain more clarity and contribute to the on-going theological dialogue of the scope of salvation in Romans.

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